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Emergency Programs: Keeping America Free From Foreign Animal Diseases

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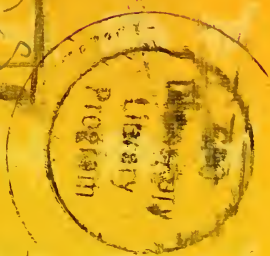
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Emergency Programs: Keeping America Free From Foreign Animal Diseases

An outbreak of a foreign animal disease in the United States could seriously damage the domestic livestock and poultry industries. In the past, infections like foot-and-mouth disease and exotic Newcastle disease have resulted in millions of dollars in losses to producers.

Keeping these serious animal diseases out of the United States is the responsibility of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS) unit. Within VS, the Emergency Programs staff coordinates efforts to prepare for and respond to outbreaks of exotic animal diseases. We must protect our \$80 billion livestock and poultry industries, which supply this country's food and fiber and generate significant export products.



In 1983–84, the Emergency Programs staff coordinated the elimination of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza from U.S. poultry flocks in the Northeast.

Emergency Programs

VS' Emergency Programs staff monitors foreign animal health and maintains an intensive surveillance system aimed at rapidly detecting and diagnosing outbreaks of exotic diseases in the United States. The staff is assisted in its efforts by Federal and State field veterinarians, animal health technicians, and disease specialists. The Emergency Programs staff also enlists the help of more than 40,000 federally accredited veterinarians from the private sector who assist with disease exclusion and control. Additionally, Veterinary Services keeps a watchful eye on U.S. borders, which could be breached by foreign animal diseases.



Emergency Programs provides laboratory support in determining if animals suspected of harboring foreign diseases are actually infected. Here, chick embryos are inoculated with material from birds thought to have exotic Newcastle disease.

Mission

Emergency Programs provides expertise on exotic animal diseases, ensures adequate disease surveillance within the United States, maintains a high level of emergency preparedness, and provides the needed resources to respond and eliminate disease outbreaks in the United States and its territories.

History

In 1971, prior to the development of the Emergency Programs unit, an outbreak of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis (a form of horse sleeping sickness) entered the United States from Mexico. Swift response by a task force of VS and State personnel prevented a widespread outbreak of the disease. This outbreak, coupled with an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in southern California the next year, led to the creation of the Emergency Programs unit in 1972.

Since its formation, Emergency Programs has successfully carried out eradication campaigns against sheep scabies (1973), exotic Newcastle disease (1974), hog cholera (1978), and avian influenza (1984).

Support Services

Emergency Programs provides training to Federal and State veterinarians, diagnosticians, animal health technicians, epidemiologists, port veterinarians, foreign



Exotic diseases that threaten the U.S. poultry industry can enter the country when pet birds are imported illegally. APHIS personnel band imported birds before their release from quarantine so they can be traced in commerce.



When practicing veterinarians identify a possible incidence of foreign animal disease and report it to APHIS, Emergency Programs staffers work with them to make a definitive diagnosis. This parrot did not have exotic Newcastle disease.

veterinary medical officers, VS program specialists, and others whose responsibilities require knowledge of foreign animal disease diagnosis and identification. In the event of a foreign animal disease outbreak, these trained professionals would be called upon to help prevent the spread of the disease.

Each year, four regional task forces receive emergency response training. Known as the Regional Emergency Animal Disease Eradication Organization (READEO), these task forces consist of APHIS-VS employees, State veterinarians, military support personnel, industry liaisons, and representatives from other units within VS, APHIS, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Emergency Programs also conducts foreign animal disease training courses at its headquarters in Hyattsville, MD, at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, IA, and at the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Plum Island, NY.

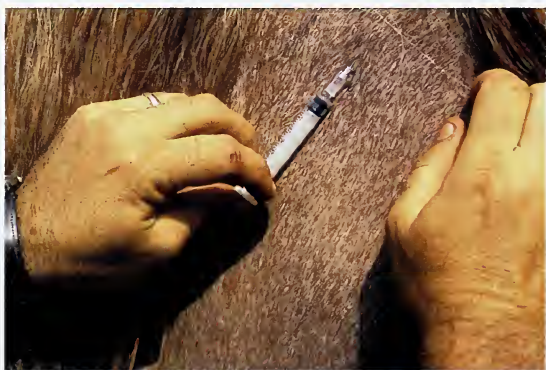


Practicing veterinarians and ranchers and farmers are the first line of defense in reporting suspected cases of foreign animal disease.

Information Resources

When a disease emergency is declared, prompt access to current scientific information is essential. Through its Animal Disease Management Information Center (ADMIC), Emergency Programs is able to access relevant literature about livestock and poultry diseases. This computerized information system, used by professionals associated with animal disease prevention, contains more than 75,000 articles and is updated annually.

In addition to ADMIC, Emergency Programs maintains a lending library of more than 5,000 color slides. These slides provide vivid photographs of foreign animal diseases and VS-related subjects. Emergency Programs also has a variety of instructional videotapes dealing with several subjects, including differential diagnosis, pathogenesis, and biosecurity.



The rapid application of vaccines for Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis by practicing veterinarians was critical in eliminating the 1971 outbreak of this disease in the United States.



More than 300 trained State and Federal foreign animal disease diagnosticians are strategically located to investigate suspected cases of exotic disease. During APHIS' hog cholera eradication program, tonsil biopsies from thousands of swine were obtained to trace the progress of the epidemic.

Focus on the Future

In order to effectively prevent future foreign animal disease outbreaks, Emergency Programs needs the help of veterinarians, livestock producers, and State and local governments. By maintaining a unified effort, this country can meet the challenge of preventing and/or eliminating exotic disease outbreaks. Emergency Programs will continue to ensure that disease surveillance and detection efforts are maintained by providing the expertise to rapidly detect and eliminate foreign animal disease outbreaks.

What You Can Do To Help

Informed veterinarians and livestock producers are the first line of defense against foreign animal diseases. Fact sheets, brochures, and printed program aids are available for distribution to interested individuals and groups. To obtain program materials, contact:

USDA-APHIS-VS-Emergency Programs
Room 741, Federal Building
6505 Belcrest Road
Hyattsville, MD 20782
Telephone (301) 436-8073

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